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COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME AND COORDINATION
Thirty-seventh session
9 June-3 July 1997
Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT

Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas)

Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION (item 4 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the statistics programme

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings, on 9 and 10 June 1997, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the statistics programme transmitted to it under cover of a note by the Secretary-General stating his concurrence with the recommendations contained in the report (E/AC.51/1997/2).

Discussion

2. Most delegations stated that they found the recommendations acceptable and agreed with the focus of the evaluation on ascertaining users' needs and providing services to them. Several delegations noted the resource implications of the findings in the report that the programme's activities and resources are too heavily concentrated on the production of publications (para. 83) and that the development of the United Nations Economic and Social Information System (UNESIS) required reconfiguration of the work flow, new staff with different skills, the acquisition of technology and retraining of staff (para. 43). Most delegations supported the rationalization of statistical publications. The rationalization should be carried out on a gradual basis, taking duly into consideration the needs and realities of developing countries, which would



continue to benefit from the distribution of free print publications until they had full access to new technologies. Several delegations cautioned that commercial viability might not coincide with the importance of a publication to Member States, especially methodological and technical publications. Several delegations noted the uneven distribution of technological capacity among Member States. Some delegations urged that the programme's strengths and contributions should be given emphasis during the United Nations reform process and the restructuring of the Secretariat in the economic and social sectors.

Conclusions and recommendations

3. The Committee commended the report for its thorough review of the programme and agreed with its characterization of the statistics programme as an example of the type of activities that the United Nations did well, and which served important needs of States.

4. The Committee endorsed the recommendations in the report on the understanding that the Director of the Statistics Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis of the Secretariat would propose an implementation plan and timetable to the 1998 meeting of the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination of the Statistical Commission. The Committee's endorsement was on the understanding that the United Nations would continue to issue a number of publications as a matter of record and for other non-commercial reasons.

5. The Committee considered that the implementation of the strategy proposed in the report, including the development of UNESIS, would require an enhancement of skill and technology and continuing technical assistance to enhance access of developing countries to new information technologies.



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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION (item 4 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth
evaluation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs

1. At its 2nd to 4th meetings, from 9 to 11 June 1997, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the in-depth evaluation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs transmitted to it under cover of a note by the Secretary-General stating his concurrence with the recommendations contained in the report (E/AC.51/1997/3).

Discussion

2. Many delegations commented on the timeliness of the report since most of the issues analysed in it would be reviewed at the upcoming 1997 session of the Economic and Social Council under its agenda item entitled "Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance". Several delegations considered that the report and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on it would provide useful inputs to the work of the Council and any reform of the United Nations. One delegation stated that, since the recommendations in the report were endorsed by the Secretary-General, it was expected that they would be utilized in any reform in the field. Several delegations stated that the Committee should bear in mind that the Secretary-General would make reform proposals in the near future.



3. With regard to the section on relief and rehabilitation, one delegation expressed the view that humanitarian relief operations should not be wound up or scaled down prematurely as that had negative implications for the rehabilitation process that followed and that exit strategies for the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be comprehensive, neutral and objective and should not be dictated by political considerations.

4. Delegates generally found the recommendations presented in the report sound and thoughtful. In the course of the debate, delegations made observations on the following recommendations:

(a) Recommendation 1. Several delegations stressed that administrative rules and regulations adapted to emergency activities should be adopted without delay;

(b) Recommendations 2 to 5. Several delegations considered that there should be more active support to natural disaster reduction as highlighted in that set of recommendations; one delegation stated that natural disaster reduction would be more effective in the context of a development programme, such as UNDP;

(c) Recommendation 6. Many delegations stressed the importance of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and strongly endorsed the recommended enhancement of the support of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to the work of the Standing Committee;

(d) Recommendations 7 and 8. Several delegations stressed the importance of achieving effective field coordination while minimizing the cost and complexity of coordination arrangements. One delegation noted that coordination arrangements and the tasks carried out were agreed upon in consultation with the host country and some delegations stressed the need for coordination, with the operations being undertaken by the national Government. One delegation considered there was a need to explore possible ways and means to enhance the role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in order to bridge peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance activities;

(e) Recommendation 13. One delegation stressed that effective monitoring would increase accountability and a more coherent approach to emergency humanitarian assistance;

(f) Recommendation 14. Several delegations raised questions on the proposed briefings of the President of the Security Council by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and stressed that such briefings should be for the full membership of the Organization. Several delegations supported the recommendations as contained in the report while several others objected to that recommendation;

(g) Recommendations 16 and 17. One delegation expressed its view that an effective early-warning system would enhance the capability of the United Nations in implementing preventive measures and increasing the success of such measures.

5. Several delegations stressed that the share of regular budget resources allocated to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should be increased to minimize the effects of the Department's reliance on extrabudgetary funding.

Conclusions and recommendations

6. The Committee expressed appreciation for the quality and comprehensive nature of the report.

7. The Committee considered that the activities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs should remain within its mandate, which was primarily a coordinating role. In that respect, the Committee was in agreement with the main thrust of the report, which was (a) to strengthen the capacity of the Department to support effectively inter-agency cooperation and coordination, through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Emergency Relief Coordinator; and (b) to ensure that the Department did not become involved in operational activities, which were more effectively carried out by the operational programmes and agencies that were represented in the Standing Committee.

8. Subject to the different views expressed by delegations during the discussion, and subject to subsequent decisions of the Economic and Social Council and of the General Assembly on the coordination of humanitarian assistance at their upcoming sessions, the Committee endorsed recommendations 1 to 13 and 14 (b) to 22 as contained in the report.

9. The Committee considered that the in-depth evaluation report and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on it should be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its forthcoming session under the item entitled "Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance".



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Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas)

Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION (item 4 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services
on topics for future in-depth evaluation

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 10 June 1997, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on topics for future in-depth evaluation, transmitted to it under cover of a note by the Secretary-General stating his concurrence with the recommendations contained in the report (E/AC.51/1997/4).

Discussion

2. While delegations found the proposals in paragraph 7 of the report generally acceptable, they considered that some flexibility was needed for in-depth evaluations due in 1999 and 2000 to take into account forthcoming decisions on reform. Some delegations also highlighted the advantages of joint consideration of the evaluation of crime prevention and criminal justice and international drug control. Several delegations stated that in addition to the considerations listed in paragraph 4 of the report, programmes that may be experiencing implementation difficulties should also be considered for in-depth evaluation. Some delegations expressed the view that the topics on "peacekeeping: start-up phase" and "peacekeeping: termination phase" should be treated in the appropriate order in the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services.



Recommendations

3. The Committee recommended to the General Assembly that the following schedule of in-depth evaluations be approved, keeping in mind the need for desired flexibility to accommodate possible changes that might arise in the context of the reform proposals of the Secretary-General and subsequent decisions that might be adopted by the General Assembly:

1998 International drug control

Crime prevention and criminal justice

1999 Disarmament

Electoral assistance

2000 Global development trends, issues and policies, and global approaches to social and microeconomic issues and policies, and the corresponding subprogrammes in the regional commissions (programmes 7.3 and 7.4 of the medium-term plan)

Advancement of women

4. The Committee noted that, if necessary, it might revert to the consideration of the issue at an appropriate stage.



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Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas)

Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION (item 4 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on
the triennial review of the in-depth evaluation of the
United Nations social development programme

1. At its 3rd meeting, on 10 June 1997, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the in-depth evaluation of the social development programme transmitted to it under cover of a note by the Secretary-General (E/AC.51/1997/5). The report did not contain recommendations.

Discussion

2. Many delegations considered the report's review of developments subsequent to the adoption of the Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development to be useful. Many delegations also found useful the information contained in the report on procedures for follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit. Some delegations noted the low and late implementation rates for some components of the programme. One delegation considered that due importance was no longer being given to work on assisting the disabled. One delegation reaffirmed the importance of international cooperation and assistance in guaranteeing full implementation of the Programme of Action together with Governments, as established in paragraph 82 of the Programme of Action.¹



Action

3. The Committee took note of the report.

Notes

¹ A/CONF.166/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.



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Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas)

Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: EVALUATION (item 4 (b))

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the
review of the United Nations Environment Programme and
the administrative practices of its secretariat, including
the United Nations Office at Nairobi

1. At its 3rd and 4th meeting, on 10 and 11 June 1997, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the administrative practices of its secretariat, including the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/51/810), the management study recommended by the Committee at its thirty-fifth session as a follow-up to the in-depth evaluation of the programme on environment (E/AC.51/1995/3 and Corr.1).

Discussion

2. Members of the Committee were informed that the report had been presented to the Fifth Committee and discussed extensively in informal consultations and that, at its nineteenth session, the UNEP Governing Council had adopted decisions pertinent to issues raised in the report; those issues would continue to receive attention during the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly on review of implementation of Agenda 21. Several delegations expressed the view that Member States should be informed about the measures taken to address the issues raised in the report.



3. Several delegations underlined the role and mandate of UNEP as the focal point and a catalyst of the environmental activities of the United Nations system. Several delegations considered that the reform should be restricted to management issues only.

4. Some delegations welcomed the completeness of the report, expressed concern about its findings and urged that the recommendations be put into effect without further delay.

Action

5. The Committee took note of the report and looked forward to the full implementation of its recommendations in accordance with the decisions of the Governing Council of UNEP at its nineteenth session.



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Rapporteur: Mrs. Sharon BRENNEN-HAYLOCK (Bahamas)

Addendum

COORDINATION QUESTIONS: REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE
COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION (item 5 (a))

1. At its 5th meeting, on 11 June 1997, the Committee considered the annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for 1996 (E/1997/54 and Corr.1).

Discussion

2. The Committee welcomed the new improved format of the report, and commended the Secretariat for presenting the policy issues and information in a concise and focused manner. Some delegations found the report descriptive, and expressed the wish for more analytical reports in the future where ACC would identify difficulties faced in implementing different mandates.

3. Delegations expressed support for the future directions identified in the Secretary-General's foreword to the report:

(a) That ACC should be a policy- and action-oriented instrument geared towards launching and monitoring concrete joint initiatives to accomplish common policy objectives;

(b) That there was a need for the organizations of the United Nations system to show at this critical juncture, beyond their individual accomplishments and reform efforts, also a collective capacity - a capacity as a system - for renewed cost-effectiveness and for adaptation and change;



(c) That there was need for a new system-wide culture, which should be based on systematic policy consultations, effective decentralization, respect of organizations' mandates and competencies, and a common appreciation of the challenges ahead and of the respective strengths of the various organizations of the system in meeting them;

(d) That there was need for improved interaction between ACC and intergovernmental bodies.

4. Generally, members of the Committee recognized the efforts of ACC to strengthen coordination within the system, and to perform a more effective role in bringing greater cohesion within the system. They requested ACC to maximize those efforts and looked forward to receiving a report on the results. Members stressed the need for ACC to continue to develop and launch concrete policy objectives and make a critical contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system. Some delegations emphasized the need for ACC to provide information on progress made in achieving these objectives in the context of its future reports. Members also stressed the need for ACC to continue to play a leading role in the coordination of policy guidelines and activities of the organizations of the system.

5. Some delegations stressed the view that priority areas in the work of ACC needed to be addressed in accordance with the priorities established by the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly and the current medium-term plans of the organizations of the system.

6. Regarding the issue of African economic recovery and development, a number of delegations welcomed the recognition by ACC of the need for ownership of programmes under the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. A call was made for a clear indication of the added value of the Special Initiative at both the national and international levels. Members welcomed the recognition by ACC of the need to find an acceptable resolution of the debt problems of African countries. Some delegations expressed the view that linkages between the Special Initiative and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa needed to be more clearly brought out and that resources should be identified for the implementation of the Special Initiative and the New Agenda.

7. On the issue of the coordinated follow-up to major international conferences, members welcomed the initiative taken by ACC to establish the ad hoc task forces. A question was raised as to whether the use of the ad hoc task forces had led to greater cost-effectiveness, and it was requested that a complete report on their work should be included in the next ACC annual overview report.

8. With regard to the ACC decision to establish an Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, one delegation, while welcoming the initiative for the advancement of women, emphasized that when ACC reviewed and acted on the recommendations of the Committee the proposed action should be in conformity with relevant provisions of the Charter.

9. A number of delegations expressed satisfaction with the continuing work of ACC in the area of assistance to countries invoking Article 50 of the Charter. They emphasized that the imposition of sanctions on some countries had had adverse effects on the economies of a number of neighbouring countries, and requested ACC to continue to keep that issue under review. Some delegations underscored the need to adopt appropriate measures for assisting countries that had been affected by the sanctions imposed in connection with the implementation of Security Council resolutions 661 (1990) of 6 August 1990 and 724 (1991) of 15 December 1991.

10. Some delegations expressed satisfaction with the progress achieved by ACC, through its Consultative Committee on Programme and Operation Questions, in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/120 of 20 December 1995 on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/42 of 26 July 1996, in particular on the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, including the work related to the selection process and performance appraisal for resident coordinators, the promotion of training programmes and field coordination workshops.

11. On the subject of the functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery, a number of delegations welcomed the measures adopted by ACC, and requested improved methods of work and streamlining of the inter-agency machinery to bring about greater effectiveness in promoting system-wide coordination. It was also noted that the co-location arrangements of the secretariats of the jointly-financed bodies in Geneva would result in cost-effectiveness and improved performance.

12. With respect to administrative questions, some delegations expressed the view that the current conditions of service of international staff were sufficiently competitive, and that ACC comments with respect to recruitment and retention difficulties had not been substantiated. They regretted the tendency by some members of the system to deviate and/or withdraw from the common system. Delegations noted the explanations given by the Secretariat in this regard. Other delegations expressed the view, however, that based on studies undertaken by the International Civil Service Commission, consideration should be given to accepting the recommendations of the Commission pertaining to the need to improve the conditions of service. One delegation went further and noted that the issue had been overtaken by events since the General Assembly, at its fifty-first session, had decided not to accept the Commission's recommendations regarding a salary increase for Professional staff.

13. Some delegations requested information on progress achieved among the organizations of the United Nations system in the use of the Integrated Management Information System for administrative operations and reporting. They noted the explanations of the Secretariat that initial consultations with heads of organizations had recently been started, and that further action would be pursued, on behalf of ACC, by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions.

14. With regard to the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), a number of delegations reaffirmed the role and the usefulness of JIU, which had been established by the

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General Assembly, expressed reservations on the recommendations of ACC with regard to JIU, and rejected a zero nominal budgetary growth for the 1998-1999 budget and that a study on the role and function of JIU should be undertaken. Other delegations stated, however, that the recommendations were entirely appropriate since the organizations of the United Nations system contributed to the budget of JIU on a cost-sharing basis, and thus had a right to ensure that JIU performed its tasks satisfactorily, in accordance with its mandate and at the lowest possible cost.

15. On the subject of the financial and budgetary situation of the United Nations, some delegations expressed serious concern about the continuing accumulation of arrears as a result of non-payment of contributions, and underlined the principle that all Member States should pay their assessments in full, in a timely manner and without conditions.

16. Members of the Committee welcomed the development, approval and implementation of common accounting standards, and the harmonization of formats of financial reporting among the organizations of the system and encouraged their widest implementation since they considered that this should assist ACC in its coordination work. One delegation asked whether ACC planned in the near future to address ways for harmonizing and strengthening internal oversight capabilities among member organizations of ACC. One delegation expressed concern at the non-implementation of cost accounting standards in the United Nations in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 51/225 of 3 April 1997, and requested ACC to report to CPC on the findings.

17. The Secretariat acknowledged the views expressed on the format and content of the report, and noted the comments and observations indicating that these would be transmitted to ACC members.

Conclusions

18. The Committee took note of the annual overview report of ACC, welcomed its new improved format, commended the Secretariat for a concise and well focused report, and requested that future reports be more analytical than descriptive.

19. The Committee urged that the orientations expressed by the Secretary-General in the foreword to the report on the role and functioning of ACC should guide the future activities of ACC.

20. The Committee agreed that ACC should continue to strengthen its role as a policy and action-oriented instrument geared to launching and monitoring concrete joint initiatives to accomplish common policy objectives, and make an effective contribution to the implementation of efforts for reform and strengthening of the system. The Committee stressed that ACC, in carrying out its primary task of strengthening coordination of activities of the United Nations system, should focus on the strategic objectives established in the Charter, the General Assembly, and the medium-term plans of the organizations of the system.

21. The Committee underscored the need for resource mobilization as a key element in ensuring the success of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. The Committee welcomed the efforts made to ensure government ownership of programmes under the Special Initiative at the country level. The Committee requested that the linkages between the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa and the Special Initiative be clearly brought out.

22. The Committee took note with appreciation of the efforts of ACC to promote a coordinated and integrated system-wide approach to the follow-up to major international conferences through ad hoc inter-agency task forces, and requested that the results of the comprehensive assessment of the work of the task forces to be carried out by ACC in 1997 should be included in the next annual overview report of ACC.

23. The Committee took note of the information provided on assistance to countries invoking Article 50 of the Charter, and indicated its support for measures for assisting countries that had been affected by the implementation of Security Council resolutions 661 (1990) and 724 (1991). The Committee requested ACC to keep the item on its agenda, and to include it in future reports.
